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MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Walt W. Rostow
Special Assistant to the President

SUBJECT : Questions on Vietnam

1. Our analysts have been pondering for some time the two "unanswerable" questions you posed to us on Vietnam. The best answers they can come up with have been spelled out in several recent memoranda.

2. We believe the Communists base their strategy in the South on a war of attrition and that they carry out this strategy with little reference to the air war in the North. Since the introduction of US forces on a large scale, Hanoi's optimum goal has been to stalemate the ground war and they have mounted their best effort to achieve this end. The bombing in the North has not been the limiting factor on their operations in the South. Logistic problems caused by our interdiction efforts clearly have not placed a relevant ceiling on Communist force structures or levels of combat. (The most recent detailed examination of these factors was presented in "Rolling Thunder: The 1967 Campaign Against LOC's," Intelligence Memorandum [redacted] 29 September 1967.)

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3. If the US stopped bombing the North without setting a time limit, we believe Hanoi would probably enter into preliminary talks with us. The Communists

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would expect to see continued attrition of the allied position in the South while such talks ensued, and would take advantage of a halt in the bombardment to improve their military capabilities. By strengthening and re-organizing their logistic routes to the South, they could stockpile supplies and reinforce their units with less risk and disruption than they now suffer. (This is treated in detail in "The Consequences of a Halt in the Bombardment of North Vietnam," Intelligence Memorandum 1391, 9 October 1967.)

Richard Helms
Director

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